

Historic Building Appraisal

No. 32 Kau Wa Keng, Kwai Tsing, N.T.

The Tsangs (曾) in Kau Wa Keng, also locally known as Kau Wa Keng Old Village (九華徑舊村), are Hakkas (客家) who settled in the village in the Qianlong (乾隆, 1736-1795) reign of the Qing (清) dynasty. Before their arrival, the village was settled by a family surnamed Ng (吳). Tsang Bak-tao (曾伯韜) first moved from Wangniugang (望牛崗) of Danshui (淡水), Huizhou (惠州), to Lizhujiao village (壙竹角村) of Baoan (寶安), Guangdong (廣東) province, that is, the present-day Tai Lam Chung (大欖涌) in 1737. His second son Wai-heng (維亨) later moved to Kau Wa Keng in the mid-18th century. Wai-heng is considered as the founding ancestor of the village.

*Historical
Interest*

Hong Kong Island was declared as a free port in 1842 and the Kowloon Peninsula was leased by Britain in 1860, which resulted in the general growth of China trade. A large number of Chinese were employed by shipping companies. Many villagers in Kau Wa Keng started to work as seamen before the lease of the New Territories. Their remittances made the village well-off.

Nos. 30 and 32 together form a two-storey residential building situated on the east side of the village at the foot of a hill. It is believed that the two houses were built around 1937 by Tsang Hin-sheung (曾憲湘) also known as Tsang Kwok-sheung (曾國湘) who was a purser by occupation. Many Tsang clansmen from the village worked as seamen and earned money to send remittances home to their families and eventually build a family residence.

The two semi-detached houses form a long narrow building which is built in a combination of Chinese and Western design. This mixed design was commonly adopted by Chinese who had worked overseas. The building is very colonial in appearance displaying beautiful classical style arched windows with wooden casements at first floor level. The windows are paired with moulded architraves with short columns carrying the arches. An elaborately decorated shaped pediment flanked by ornamental posts and parapet walls adorns the front elevation. The front entrances have covered forecourts, and the arched windows continue along the exposed side elevation. The facades are further enhanced by moulded cills under the windows and a wide projecting cornice at parapet level. The roof appears to be partly pitched and partly flat. Internally the rooms are long and narrow. Kitchens and bathrooms are situated at the rear.

*Architectural
Merit*

Although the elegant appearance of the building has been married by ugly *Rarity,*

temporary lean-to structures added on, Nos. 30 and 32 display some rare and fine architectural features. Alterations are evident both internally and externally somewhat compromising authenticity. ***Built Heritage Value & Authenticity***

The social value of the building lies in its role since it was built as a village residence, and its existence due to the hard work and financial success of Tsang Hin-sheung. Its distinctive mixed architectural features give it historical and local interest. ***Social Value & Local Interest***

No. 32 has group value with other historic buildings in the village, and the former Lai Chi Kok Hospital (荔枝角醫院) (Grade 3). ***Group Value***

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